

## **Civil Affairs Soldiers support MEDCAP**

426th Civil Affairs Battalion Public Affairs

Civil Affairs Soldiers assigned to the 426th Civil Affairs Company B visited the Balad Ruz mayor's office and assisted with the Medical Civil Action Program (MEDCAP) May 11.

The 426th CA Co. B is an Army reserve special operations unit based out of Upland, Calif. and is currently deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Capt. Chris Chang, a CA officer assigned to 426th CA Co. B, was attending a city council meeting when his team's medic and CA specialist volunteered to assist the 278th Regimental Combat Team's medical staff with a MEDCAP.

A MEDCAP is a military program that provides basic medical attention to locals in need, said Chang.

"My primary job is as the civil affairs team medic, treating American soldiers, however when I see an opportunity where I can lend my skills to aid the Iraqi people I do," said Sgt. Kelly Dawson, a civil affairs medic assigned to the 426th CA Co.

"Now I'm assisting the doctor on a regular basis, twice a week," Dawson continued. "We can't always help everyone, but those we can I feel really good about. We even have sent a handful of Iraqis back to the United States for further treatment"

According to Dawson, approximately 100 people requested medical attention.

"My primary role today was to mingle with those waiting to be screened," said Sgt. Melia Dewitt, a civil affairs Soldier assigned to the 426th CA Co. "I passed out stuffed animals to the children and tooth brushes and tooth paste to both the parents and children. The patients, especially women and children, are usually fascinated with me because I am female. The interpreters are usually tied up with the medics, so I communicate and answer their questions to the best of my abilities. Some things are universal, such as a smile"

426th CA Co. B is currently attached to the 411th CA Battalion, an Army reserve special operations unit based out of Danbury, Conn. Both units are currently deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The units distributed more than 20,000 tons of school supplies, and scheduled more than \$1.6 billion in reconstruction projects for the provinces of Salah ad Din, Diyala, Kirkuk and As Sulaymaniyah.

The 411th CA Bn also holds the distinctions of being the first Civil Affairs Battalion to enter Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the first to return for a second rotation.



**Lt. Col. William Woods, a Civil Affairs officer, puts new shoes on an Iraqi boy during a humanitarian assistance mission in Baghdad, Iraq. CA missions include both medical and civil support and are an example of the wide spectrum of SOF support to the people of Iraq. Photo by Sgt. Karolina Lojewska**